THE
Dan Smoot Report

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DAN SMOOT

IF McGUFFEY READERS WERE IN OUR SCHOOLS . . .

Recently, *The Dallas Morning News*[1] published a letter from a public high school senior, omitting the boy's name but retaining his original spelling:

"Where can I lern jeurnalizm best? Its been a dream for a long time — I want to be a raporter. It would help my moral if you anser this note."

This 17-year-old boy is a product of the most extensive and expensive educational system in the history of civilization.

Compulsory government schools (elementary and secondary public schools, not including tax-supported institutions of higher learning) cost American taxpayers more than $40 billion a year (32 to 36 billion in state and local taxes; 7 to 10 billion in federal taxes).[2]

But billions of tax dollars, and costly buildings stuffed with students and adult educationists, have failed to educate children. Millions of Johnnys and Janes still cannot read; and the Marvins and Marys who can are exposed to precious little worth reading.

Note this from *U. S. News & World Report:*[3]

"There is disturbing evidence that millions of youngsters are being graduated from high school with only the barest reading ability. . . .

"There is widespread concern . . . that the U.S. is becoming a nation of lip-movers and finger-pointers. Literacy, it is feared, is becoming obsolete. . . .

"The evidence of national failure in reading is varied — and mounting. . . .

"At every level, the nation's educators are experimenting to find a way to make people read."

Now, President Nixon adopts a "right to read" program as a national goal of the 70's, and asks for 200 million tax dollars to fund the program the first year.[4]

But the growing trend toward elimination of grading children in public schools will remove what

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is left of academic discipline, and will further debase the educational process, no matter how much additional money is spent.

Indeed, increasing the expenditure of tax money on government schools will *aggravate*, not *alleviate*, the problem of educating our young; and the emphasis on more spending as the solution to the problem discourages many from seriously contemplating the *real* solution: a system of voluntary, private schools. If more than 40 billion tax dollars a year are inadequate to operate our present public schools, how could people ever raise enough money for a complete system of private schools?

Actually, a major problem of public schools is that *too much* money is spent on them.

Most public school teachers (generally under compulsion of one kind or another) belong to unions — either an AFL-CIO teachers union or the National Education Association (which operates like a union).[5] The philosophy of unionism and the bureaucratic administration of public schools require teachers to be treated as general averages, rather than as professional individuals. Teachers do not get salaries commensurate with ability and performance. The worst teachers in a public school system get as much pay as the best with comparable tenure and status. The only way for a good teacher to get a raise is for everyone in the entire system to get one. The result is that, though taxpayers are crushed with school taxes, good teachers often do not get the income they deserve, because too many ineffectives and undesirables get more than they deserve.

Public schools spend a frightful amount of money on books that have no educational value — and on some that are quite objectionable. An example of the latter kind is *Land Of The Free: A History of the United States*, now in general use in California secondary schools and in many school systems elsewhere. This book gives such a distorted, socialistic, propagandistic review of American history (especially since 1860) that it will do great damage. Pornographic materials used in many public school sex-education programs are among the most expensive of "educational tools" — and among the most harmful to children.

To mollify Negro militants, some public schools are establishing "black studies," requiring heavy expenditures for new teachers and for new books, most of which give a false account of history, and do little to equip children for successful living in our society.

Busing for integration in public schools detracts from educational activities, and costs hundreds of millions of tax dollars a year. Forced integration also leads to violence and vandalism which cause heavy property damage in public schools, and add great costs for security and policing activities.

Huge sums are spent for public school athletic programs in which the emphasis is on producing winning teams rather than on inducing sedentary, sickly, or bookish youngsters to participate in sports. Consequently, school athletic programs seldom, if ever, accomplish the objectives of teaching youngsters (who would otherwise not know) the value of athletics, and of imparting athletic skills and habits to those youngsters who would not otherwise acquire them.

The purpose of elementary and secondary schools should be to give children the skills which will enable them to go to the limits of their initiative and ability in acquiring education. This purpose can be accomplished by teaching, drilling, and reviewing children in using the basic tools of learning (spelling, reading, writing, and arithmetic), and by requiring them to read worthwhile books. The essentials for accomplishing this purpose are good teachers, comfortable rooms, and good textbooks. These essentials are within the private means of the people of the United States. If provided, they would produce better education at less cost than expensive equipment and costly frills now produce in politically-controlled government schools.

Recognition of these facts, and the dearth of good textbooks, account for a growing interest in McGuffey's Readers — first published in 1836, and in general use in the elementary schools of

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America during about half of the 19th century. These old textbooks have been available for years in facsimile editions; but present interest in them is so widespread that a major publishing firm[6] has republished them from original plates of the 1897 edition.

About a hundred years ago, many American homes had no other books but McGuffey's Readers and the Bible. Many affluent homes today do not have libraries to equal that collection.

Without spending another 200 million tax dollars, President Nixon could find out how to teach children to read — by looking through McGuffey's seven textbooks (primer and six readers for elementary school children) to see how it was done, effectively and inexpensively, 100 years ago.

McGuffey begins, in the primer, by requiring children to memorize the alphabet. They then learn to use the building stones of their language to form simple words. The words are presented with diacritical markings so that children can learn to pronounce and spell correctly. Pupils then read stories — *interesting* stories — containing words they have learned to spell and pronounce. Each story begins with a drill in spelling and pronouncing all new words introduced.

Work, drill, review, proper pronunciation, correct spelling are heavily emphasized throughout the McGuffey books.

McGuffey apparently believed that a human brain acts upon, and is influenced by, the information fed into it. Hence, reading selections presented to children in his readers are taken from great writings which extol, explain, and illustrate such virtues as honesty, charity, thrift, hard work, courage, patriotism, reverence for God, respect for parents.

McGuffey's Primer ends with a poem about the importance of prayer. The First Reader ends with an essay informing pupils that they should work hard to make the most of the privilege their parents have given them by sending them to school. The Second Reader introduces pupils to such poetry as Tennyson's beautiful "Lullaby." "The Lord's Prayer" is one of many fine reading selections in the Third Reader. In the Fourth Reader, pupils learn more about God by reading "Evening Hymn," "The Creator," "The Sermon on the Mount."

When he reaches McGuffey's Sixth Reader, the child is ready for extensive samplings from the world's greatest literature; and he gets them. It would be safe to wager that not one-third of all persons graduating from American colleges in the past 20 years have read half as much great literature as is contained in McGuffey's Sixth Reader.

The beautiful little book is a classic anthology. It contains long passages from the Bible, nine selections from Shakespeare, and more than a hundred from the best works of other giants of the past — from Patrick Henry's speech before the Virginia Convention ("Give me liberty, or give me death . . ."), to Blackstone's "Origin of Property." Biographies are presented under such titles as "Character of Napoleon Bonaparte," "Character of Mr. Pitt," "Character of Columbus," "Character of Washington."

If the students now enrolled in primary and secondary schools could be induced to read and understand "Character of the Puritan Fathers of New England" from McGuffey's Sixth Reader, the experience would doubtless have more wholesome educational effect on American youth than will be achieved by the spending of 40 billion tax dollars in the current school year.

The effect of *not* exposing young people to educational materials comparable to McGuffey's Readers is suggested by school board members at Twin Lakes, Wisconsin, who say:

"He taught us basic morals of Americanism. . . . If we had McGuffey's in our schools, we never would have had those defections among our troops overseas."[7]

Yet, these books, with their spiritual content, would be considered illegal in most government schools today, because of federal court decisions banning God from the classrooms!

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Obviously, if we want our children educated properly, we must build an adequate system of private schools. It *can* be done.

Schools, concentrating on McGuffey-type drill in educational fundamentals, are being built and operated successfully as profit-making enterprises.

Christian schools operated by evangelical churches are mushrooming in number,[8] despite the fact that a prominent HEW official says "the day of Christian education is about over."[9]

Throughout the Old South, parents, abandoning chaotic government schools, are building nonsectarian private schools. Some 300,000 (or more) children are now in such schools.[8]

One interesting example is in Jackson, Mississippi, where the Council School Foundation, a non-profit corporation, opened its first school in 1966, with 22 pupils and three teachers. In September, 1969, it had three schools and 500 pupils. Then came the Supreme Court's *integrate-now* order. In seven weeks, the Foundation built 110 new classrooms (at a cost of about $4000 each) to accommodate new students. The three schools in Jackson now have 3100 pupils — and expect 5000 or more next September. The Foundation is operating "comfortably in the black," and has no trouble repaying construction loans. Tuition in Foundation schools is $400 a year for elementary school, $500 for high school — with a maximum of $1200 for four or more children from the same family. For poor families, aid is available — mostly in the form of work scholarships. Boys and girls (and sometimes parents) pay tuition by working: cleaning classrooms and corridors, tending lawns, handling trash.[10]

We *can*, and *must*, give our children the education necessary to preserve our heritage and save our civilization.

SOMETHING YOU SHOULD DO

This is the last of a series of nine *Reports* dealing with schools. Three other *Reports*, published in 1965, 1968, and 1969, supplement this series to give a complete story on how communism, the courts, and radical politicians have replaced education with social revolution in our schools. The 1965 *Report* also discloses the scheme for international control of public schools.

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FOOTNOTES

(1) Dick West column, Feb. 8, 1970
(2) *The 1969 World Almanac*, pp. 344-345; *U.S. News & World Report*, Sept. 5, 1966, pp. 42-44
(3) June 12, 1967, pp. 72-74
(4) *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, Mar. 6, 1970, pp. 714-718
(5) "Teachers Must Pay Compulsory Dues to NEA Union Bosses or Be Fired," *National Right To Work Newsletter*, Mar. 1970
(6) Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 450 West 33rd Street, New York City 10001
(7) "McGuffey Readers Are Going Back To School," by Jerry Klein, Women's News Service, Dec. 12, 1969
(8) "Why Many Private Schools Are Zooming," *U.S. News & World Report*, Nov. 10, 1969, pp. 50-52
(9) Information from Dr. W. O. H. Garman, president of the American Association of Christian Schools of Higher Learning, 1919 Beech Street, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15221
(10) James Jackson Kilpatrick column, *Human Events*, Mar. 7, 1970

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